



MUNDO Cuervo

DONDE EL TEQUILA SE VIVE

THE HISTORY OF

JOSE CUERVO®

Jose Antonio de Cuervo and his sons Jose Maria Guadalupe and Jose Prudencio could never have imagined that the hundreds of agave plants they were cultivating during the eighteenth-century would eventually multiply to millions of plants with the passage of time. Neither could they see that they would be the founders of a tequila dynasty that would in turn become one of the most successful businesses in Mexico as well as its oldest tequila company.

It is possible Casa Cuervo® was born before 1795 and that it is in fact possibly one of the oldest businesses in the country. We do not know for sure if Jose Antonio de Cuervo, who in 1758 had obtained land to grow crops in what is now Tequila, Jalisco, was included among those who planted agave there at the beginning of the 18th century.

Jose Prudencio de Cuervo, the son of Jose Antonio, sealed his relationship with Tequila between 1771 and 1775 when he helped with the construction of the local parish church. It was in 1781, under the prohibition of Carlos III which forbade the production and sale of more than 75 drinks in Mexico because they were thought to demean the souls and conduct of indigenous peoples, that he bought the cattle farms of the Hacienda de Abajo where later the Taverna de Cuervo would be built. In 1795, his brother, Jose Maria Guadalupe Cuervo, received from Carlos IV, after the previously mentioned prohibition had been lifted, the first license to produce “mezcal wine”, the antecedent of what we today know of as tequila. With this, the formal history of the oldest tequila company in Mexico began.

Much later, upon the death of Jose Guadalupe, all of his properties were bequeathed to his two children, Don Jose Ignacio Faustino and Dona Maria Magdalena de Cuervo. Dona Maria later married Vicente Albino Rojas, to whom she gave all of her property. In turn, Don Vicente could not resist re-naming the business after his mother-in-law, re-baptizing the distillery “La Rojeña®. This led to building a new “taverna”, increasing the landed inheritance and adding considerably to production which led to greater sales of mescal not only in Jalisco, but in many other states as well.

In the nineteenth-century, three local industrialists were responsible for the growth of Cuervo: Vicente Albino Rojas, Jesus Flores and Jose Cuervo Labastida.

By the middle of the nineteenth-century La Rojeña® was the most famous tavern in all of Tequila and had planted more than three million agave plants to use in producing “mezcal” wine.

During the greater part of the nineteenth-century, La Rojeña® had to deal with great political instability caused by both internal wars and foreign interventions. The grandson of Don Vicente Jose Lopez

Portillo y Rojas has pointed out that the riches of his grandfather dwindled substantially during this time.

Upon the death of Don Vicente, La Rojeña® was inherited by his two children: Ines and Maria Rojas de Lopez Portillo who then turned over La Rojeña® to Don Jesus Flores. He was the proprietor of the La Florena and La del Puente taverns, the latter later known as La Constancia. No one knows how or why La Rojeña® passed into the hands of a new owner, but nevertheless he gave new energy to the enterprise making it one of the most important in the region.

Jesus Flores was the first tequila-maker to bottle his tequila; up until then, tequila had been stored only in wooden barrels. In 1891, Porfirio Diaz granted a diploma and a gold medal for quality to the tequilas of Casa Cuervo®. On the death of Don Jesus, his wife, Ana Gonzalez Rubio, inherited the taberna and in 1900 married Jose Cuervo® Labastida, head of La Constancia. From then on, tequila became Jose Cuervo® Tequila.

It appears that Jose Cuervo® tequila is descended from the old patriarch of tequila because of having received various patents, priviledges and labels such as “The Great Mezcal maker in Tequila, Jose Cuervo®.”

By the beginning of the century, La Rojeña® had more than four million agave plants located in fields and farms such as Santa Teresa, La de Guevara, Camichines, Santa Ana, Las Cuevas, La Camotera, Los Colgados, La Fundicion, El Colorado, Las Marias, San Pedro and Guamuchil, among others.

Jose Cuervo strengthened La Rojeña® and won many prizes at international expositions such as the “Gran Premio” in Madrid in 1907 and the Gran Prix” at the 1909 International Exposition of Nutrition and Hygiene in Paris, as well as many others.

More than just concerned with business, Jose Cuervo and his wife Ana dedicated themselves to improving the condition of the pueblo of Tequila: they gave potable water to the community, built parochial and public schools, constructed roofed washing facilities, contributed to flooring the church, repaired the public clock, contributed land for a train to serve the public, paved streets and expanded the Plaza de Armas. When the public cemetery become full, Jose Cuervo bought land nearby and gave it to the community so that townspeople could be buried without cost.

With the beginning of the twentieth-century, however, those tequila makers who had not modernized their processes faced enormous problems. In 1910, of the 87 mezcal and tequila makers that had once existed in Tequila, only 32 remained. La Rojeña® did not suffer these problems and its importance was such that Jose Cuervo became the governor of Jalisco during the government of Francisco Leon de la Barra.

In 1914, revolutionary forces were threatening to sack Guadalajara. With this situation as a background, Virginia Gallardo-the future inheritor of Cuervo-married Juan Beckmann, the German consul in Guadalajara. In 1921, Jose Cuervo died and his wife, Anita Gonzalez Rubio, once more came to the fore at La Rojeña®.

In 1934, Guadalupe Gallardo inherited the estate of his aunt Anita and managed the business until 1957. Guillermo Freytag Schreir managed Tequila Cuervo® from 1957 until 1964 when Juan Beckman Gallardo, grandson of the tequila maker Luciano de Jesus Gallardo and great-nephew of

Guadalupe Gallardo, took over Cuervo®, and has since then maintained the success and vision of his predecessors.

At the present time, Juan Beckmann Vidal, in addition to maintaining the pre-eminence of the company above all as an exporter, has led Cuervo® to make great technological advances. With laboratories that specialize in the growth of the agave plant, it seeks to both strengthen the plant itself while concentrating its juices to yield better results

As the Cuervo`s of the eighteenth-century could not imagine that they were planting seeds for following generations, today the company is also planting seeds for the future. Today, Tequila Cuervo® is growing and looking forward to its future, but at the same time, without losing sight of its past.